

4. PURPOSE AND NEED

The identification of a proposed action's purpose and need is the primary foundation for the identification of reasonable alternatives and the evaluation of the impacts of the development. In exercising its authority and in the public interest, the FAA considers assigning, maintaining and enhancing safety and security as its highest priority (49 U.S.C. 40101(d)). This is the FAA's first consideration in evaluating the purpose and need for any proposed airport improvements.

The *purpose* of the proposed action is to:

1. Enable Lambert to effectively and safely accommodate projected levels of aviation activity at an acceptable level of delay by:
 - Increasing airfield capacity.
 - Improving visual flight rules (VFR) capacity.
 - Allowing dual simultaneous independent IFR arrival operations.
 - Decreasing delays.
2. Enhance the National Airspace System (NAS) by:
 - Reducing delays nationwide.
 - Increasing airfield capacity.
3. Recognize the importance of the economic benefits provided by Lambert and allow the local communities and the region to continue to reap those economic benefits.
4. Facilitate the airline hub at St. Louis, which is vital to alleviating projected shortfalls in capacity at Lambert and in the NAS. This is interrelated with all of the above purposes for the proposed project.

The proposed action is *needed* because:

1. The existing airport is severely constrained and it is projected that the airport will be unable to adequately meet projected levels of demand without incurring unacceptable operational delays;

2. As an important component of the NAS, Lambert cannot be allowed to become a “bottleneck,” because it would have detrimental ripple effects throughout the airspace system; and
3. The airport serves an important function in providing economic benefits important to the airport sponsor and the region.

INCREASED AIRFIELD CAPACITY

The 9,000-foot length of Runway 12W/30W will accommodate the operation of most of the aircraft types currently operating and projected to operate at Lambert. Both ends of Runway 12W/30W will be equipped with an ILS. In addition, the PRM, which is to be installed for the existing airfield, will be used for the new runway.

The increased airfield capacity provided by Runway 12W/30W will substantially reduce the existing and projected average annual delay time per aircraft operation. These estimated decreases in delay time will result in annual savings in aircraft delay costs. Conversely, estimated aircraft taxiing distances and time will slightly increase aircraft operating costs as a result of Runway 12W/30W. Taken together, there will be an estimated net savings in aircraft delay costs and taxiing costs of close to \$100 million in the year 2005 and approaching \$300 million in the year 2015.

PASSENGER HUB EFFICIENCY

The continued use of Lambert as an effective major airline hub will be constrained if the airport facilities are not expanded to accommodate future demand. One key airside feature associated with other hub airports that is absent from Lambert is simultaneous independent IFR arrival capability (including marginal VFR). The lack of independent IFR arrival capability greatly impacts the ability of a hub airline in St. Louis to effectively meet projected demand. Without an improvement in IFR and marginal VFR operating capability, the reliability of services at Lambert will be increasingly burdened during the periods of the year when IFR and marginal VFR weather conditions occur (approximately 14 percent of the year). Without terminal and airfield expansion capabilities, it will be difficult for Lambert to continue as an effective hub airport. This lack of facilities and expansion capabilities will result in increased delay times, decreases in airport capacity, and increased costs to the airlines and the traveling public.

From a national perspective, it is in the interest of the FAA to maintain an airline hub at Lambert. The FAA believes that due to its central location in the U.S. and its local market, St. Louis is a natural hubbing location. St. Louis is the only place within hundreds of miles in any direction where there are both a very large air travel

origination/destination market and airport capacity that can handle substantial hubbing activity. Keeping the traffic that now hubs at St. Louis flowing smoothly and efficiently is critical to the entire national aviation system.

MULTIPLE AIRPORT SYSTEMS

Shifting some of Lambert's operations to another airport to relieve existing and future forecast capacity problems has been debated and studied for several years. Recent studies have found that, even though there are nearby available facilities capable of handling commercial jet traffic, such as Scott Air Force Base/Mid-America Airport (Scott AFB/MAA), the overflow of commercial jet operations from Lambert to other airports in the region would not efficiently solve the capacity problem because most of the aviation activity is associated with airline hubbing. The lack of a sponsor for airport expansion in another political jurisdiction is a reality that the FAA is authorized to consider under CEQ regulations. Correspondence from St. Clair County, the operator of MAA (which is a joint-use facility with SCOTT AFB), indicates that St. Clair supports Lambert as the regional hub.

Use of multiple airports would complicate the hubbing issue, because an adequate level of peak-hour operations required to maintain hubbing operations at one location might not be obtainable if traffic were split between two airports. In this case, both airports would lose. In addition, a threshold of 10 to 12 million originating passengers is needed for a community to support a second commercial service airport. The St. Louis forecasts indicate that originating passengers for the St. Louis metropolitan area in the year 2015 would be approximately 8.7 million, below the threshold for a second commercial service airport.

The continued use of Lambert as a major airline hub is in question, unless expanded to accommodate future demand. St. Louis competes with other airline hubs that are being or have been expanded. Unless more operational capability is provided, Lambert's ability to compete will be limited.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Lambert plays an important role in supporting the economic goals of the St. Louis metropolitan region. Over the years, Lambert has evolved into one of the largest employment and income centers in the region. The proposed Runway 12W/30W project will strengthen Lambert as a major economic asset that serves as a vital link to the nation and world, as well as a significant employment and income center.